

**FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
SOUTH POWDER RIVER BASIN COAL
CAMPBELL AND CONVERSE COUNTIES, WYOMING
ABSTRACT**

Lead Agency:

USDI Bureau of Land Management
Casper Field Office
Casper, Wyoming

Cooperating Agencies:

USDA Forest Service
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest
Douglas, Wyoming

USDI Office of Surface Mining Reclamation & Enforcement
Western Regional Coordinating Center
Denver, Colorado

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Abstract:

This Final Environment Impact Statement (EIS) assesses the environmental consequences of decisions to hold five separate competitive, sealed-bid sales and issue leases for five tracts of federal coal located adjacent to four existing surface coal mines in Campbell and Converse Counties, Wyoming, subject to standard and special lease stipulations. A separate decision to hold or not to hold a sale will be made for each of the five tracts being considered for leasing. The five federal coal tracts are:

The NARO North and NARO South Lease By Application (LBA) Tracts, as applied for by Powder River Coal Company, include a total of approximately 4,503 acres containing approximately 564 million tons of federal coal. Powder River Coal Company operates the adjacent North Antelope/Rochelle Complex and proposes to mine the NARO North and NARO South LBA Tracts as maintenance tracts for the existing mine complex, if lease sales are held and they acquire one or both of the leases. BLM's Preferred Alternative is to lease the NARO North LBA Tract as applied for and to lease a modified NARO South LBA Tract. Under BLM's Preferred Alternatives, the two tracts would include approximately 5,326 acres and 577.3 million tons of recoverable coal.

The Little Thunder LBA Tract, as applied for by Ark Land Company, includes approximately 3,449 acres containing approximately 479 million tons of federal coal. Thunder Basin Coal Company operates the adjacent Black Thunder Mine and proposes to mine the Little Thunder LBA Tract as a maintenance tract for the existing mine, if a lease sale is held and they acquire the lease. Ark Land Company and Thunder Basin Coal Company are both subsidiaries of Arch Coal, Inc. BLM's Preferred Alternative is to lease a modified Little Thunder LBA Tract, which would include approximately 5,083.5 acres and 553 million tons of recoverable coal.

The West Roundup LBA Tract, as applied for by Triton Coal Company LLC, includes approximately 1,871 acres containing approximately 173 million tons of federal coal. Triton Coal Company LLC operates the adjacent North Rochelle Mine and proposes to mine the West Roundup LBA Tract as a maintenance tract for the existing mine, if a lease sale is held and they acquire the lease. BLM's Preferred Alternative is to lease a modified West Roundup LBA Tract, which would include approximately 2,653 acres and 213.8 million tons of recoverable coal.

The West Antelope LBA Tract, as applied for by Antelope Coal Company, includes approximately 3,542 acres containing approximately 294 million tons of federal coal. Antelope Coal Company operates the adjacent Antelope Mine and proposes to mine the West Antelope LBA Tract as a maintenance tract for the existing mine, if a lease sale is held and they acquire the lease. BLM's Preferred Alternative is to lease a modified West Antelope LBA Tract, which would include approximately 2,809 acres and 170.4 million tons of recoverable coal.

This Final EIS describes the physical, biological, cultural, historic, and socioeconomic resources in and surrounding the existing mines and LBA Tracts. For each of the five LBA tracts, the alternatives in the Final EIS consider the impacts of leasing the tract as it was applied for; leasing a reconfigured tract in order to avoid bypassing federal coal and/or to increase the competitiveness of the federal coal in and around the tract; and not leasing the tract. The focus for the impact analysis was based upon resource issues and concerns identified during previous coal leasing analyses and public scoping conducted for these lease applications. Potential concerns related to development include impacts to surface and ground water resources, air quality, and wildlife and cumulative impacts related to ongoing surface coal mining and other proposed development in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming.

Portions of the NARO North, Little Thunder, and West Roundup LBA Tracts are part of the Thunder Basin National Grassland, which is administered by the USDA-Forest Service. The Forest Service must consent to leasing these lands before the BLM can complete decisions to hold lease sales for these three tracts.

The Wyoming State Director is the BLM's Authorized Officer responsible for preparing this Final EIS.